

NMI/Starmet Re-use Planning Committee

Accepted Meeting Minutes

May 29, 2020

Consistent with the Town's "Temporary Policy Directive and Guidelines for Public Meeting and Public Hearings conducted Via Remote Participation Due To Covid-19 State of Emergency," this meeting was conducted as a Zoom meeting, and the public was invited to view the meeting. The meeting was identified by the meeting ID 870 0200 4639.

PRESENT:

Members: Gary Kleiman, Andrew Boardman, Jim Burns, Pam Rockwell, Karl Seidman, Paul Boehm.

Others: Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning & Land Management Department (DPLM)
Kate McEneaney, member of the Planning Board
Linda Escobedo, member of the Select Board (by phone as user_1)
Jeremy Romanul, office of the Select Board, meeting host

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 am.

Gary read the instructions for participation.

Discuss SKEO Final Report and Virtual Outreach. Gary asked the group to discuss ideas about how to spread the information around that is available in the SKEO final reuse assessment, which is available on line here:
<https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/24638/NMI-Reuse-Final-Report-April-2020> .

Marcia suggested that it can serve as a public outreach and informational piece. The committee is not able to have public meetings right now, and Town staff is over committed right now. She is working part time at home, part time in the office, and the Town government is opening very slowly. It was suggested that perhaps we could get a consultant to help with outreach.

Gary asked what our options are for virtual outreach and gathering public input? The committee all pointed out that there is a real issue surrounding using area A-2, the tree covered hillside adjacent to Rt 62 that backs up to Minute Man Arc on Forest Ridge Rd, as a source for clean fill to replace contaminated soils that are removed, and agreed that there needs to be real outreach on this issue. Gary reminded us of the committee schedule which indicates that we would plan to do outreach on A-2, plan to do outreach on 3 major site plans, and present our final report by December.

The committee discussed whether getting the feedback that we need is possible with the COVID-19 restrictions in place. Paul suggested that we need to have our concept together by July, and A-2 is an important discussion point. Paul asked about the ownership question and whether the Select Board is moving forward with having Town counsel begin the investigation required to take the property? The committee discussed the current legal budget and noted that additional funds in the legal budget would be increased by Town Meeting authorization, but Town meeting has been postponed.

Karl pointed out that the reuse concepts need feedback from the public – especially concerning whether there will be housing on the site. The committee needs to do risk communication about the site to be sure that people can be comfortable with housing on the site. Marcia and Karl pointed out that we will want to at least communicate the three basic reuse scenarios, but we need real discussion about A-2. Gary suggested that we may need to develop a ‘survey monkey’ questionnaire to get feedback on the plans.

Pam pointed out that early versions of the Remedial Design Workplan is available for review. It includes soil testing of site A-2 to determine its suitability as clean fill. Pam and Paul will encourage EPA to get a net environmental analysis added to the workplan to evaluate the true environmental trade-offs between preserving the hillside by trucking in fill, compared to leveling some of the trees to use the hillside soils for fill. (Pam will email Jim with links to the workplan.)

Jim pointed out that the risk communication around the nuclear materials issue and housing is important to work on now, and Paul reiterated that there will be no radiation risk when the site is cleaned up, so we should be careful to avoid using terms like radioactive or nuclear to discuss the site in our risk communication. Paul pointed out that the SKEO report is our best tool for outreach right now. The committee had some basic risk communication information for the discussion with the Select Board. Pam will update that information with comments from the SKEO report. Karl will produce a page of text for risk communication/outreach.

Paul began a discussion to assess how committee members feel about using A-2 for fill. Pam and Paul both want to use the fill from the site. Gary, Karl, Andrew, and Jim are all inclined to leave the hillside undisturbed. Karl agrees about the importance of leaving ~~old-mature~~ growth trees, but wants to know how risky bringing in fill from offsite would be.

Individual Committee Member work to support outreach. In advance of the meeting, Gary had sent out suggestions for activities that committee members could work on individually while we prepare for our next steps.

Gary pointed out that the committee had planned to start getting buy in with site visits, but that cannot happen right now. He asked Linda Escobedo if she could look into where we stand with the legal and ownership questions.

Karl pointed out that with the closing of businesses and loss of revenue and change of behaviors, it is impossible to do meaningful market research right now. We will need to wait a year. Gary pointed out that our report might not be comprehensive without market research.

The committee discussed who could work on each of the items above. The final committee assignments were:

- 1) **Pam will work on Risk messaging and Paul will ask EPA for an environmental assessment.**
- 2) **Karl will work with Kate Mcneaney on examples of similar redevelopment sites with the variety of uses that we are considering. Paul will provide him with some information about state cleanups that are similar (there are not a lot of superfund sites that have been turned into housing after a cleanup, only ones that started out as housing sites.)**
- 3) **Steven Ng has moved out of Concord and has left our committee, so Gary will look into different long term agreements with the Town for public/private redevelopment options.**
- 4) **Market research is postponed for now.**

- 5) **Jim will look into housing.** Marcia suggested that the Regional Housing Services Office staff could help identify what types of buildings might be needed and what communities need what type of housing. Jim really wants some examples of housing built on areas that had radioactive contamination. Paul pointed out again that there is not a radiation problem at this site, and he will provide Jim with some examples of state level cleanups with risk similar to our site that were redeveloped into housing.
- 6) **Karl will work on the finance issues.**
- 7) **Paul will work with the recreation department for gaps in fields and indoor program.**
- 8) **Gary addressed the issue of what other buildings in Town are being developed, and how we get our plan going ...He suggested that we will get some info from the long-term capital planning committee, get info from the other committees that we have already done outreach to, and then hand off our work to those committees to develop their plans for what they want to do with the site.**
- 9) **Linda will work with the Select Board on legal and ownership issues.**

Public Comment

Linda suggested that we not think of A2 as an all or nothing use, rather think about discussing the options of using 30%, 60%, or 90% of the hillside for fill. And we need to be sure that there is a traffic assessment in the environmental assessment of whether we will use an onsite or offsite source of backfill.

Gary pointed out that the mature trees are a valuable asset. US Forestry Service has a modelling tool called iTree that can be used to assess the value of trees. Linda pointed out that there are new ideas in the scientific community that mature trees are not more valuable than new trees, since trees have a limited lifespan and there are environmental concerns about preserving old, dying trees.

Linda confirmed that the Select Board had not asked for the lawyers to start working on taking the property because the legal budget is topped off. Gary pointed out that it will be incomplete without either legal or market research.

Kate suggested that she could help Karl doing background research on examples, and would like to develop a slide presentation of “what this world of redevelopment looks like”. Will there be an opportunity to walk around other sites? (probably not). Perhaps a table might be a good first step.

Kate also suggested that there is a local election coming up, perhaps we could use that forum to post information or a survey.

Kate also felt there should be a “preserve the whole site” option, to maximize open space. Paul pointed out that the SKEO report does discuss that option, and that even our most developed concept for the site still leaves half of the space as natural, undeveloped open space. Gary pointed out that we are spending a lot of tax dollars on this cleanup, and we need to think about the return on balance for the quarter of a billion dollars that will be spent on this site.

Paul mentioned that he is continuing to track the Natural Resource Restoration funds to make sure that they will be used at the site (there is no requirement that these funds be used on the site.) These funds could be used for a lot of different purposes, including a nature viewing area.

The next meeting is June 12.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Rockwell, Clerk